

WINNER

Tell us about the things you are thankful for this year and why

Regardless our background or religion Thanksgiving is a holiday we all celebrate in a way, despite the fact not all of us have turkeys on the fourth Thursday of November. It is the time of the year when we examine our lives closely and make a checklist of the many things we are truly grateful for, things that with the speedy way of living are often taken for granted.

First and foremost I am thankful for being alive, for being accepted and loved for who I am, for being in good health and thus being able to grateful for the many things life has to offer.

I am wholly and totally thankful for my family.

I am thankful for their health, the love they give me every day, for the fact that they have been there for me through good and bad times, for catching me when I've fallen, for the laughs we've had, for the stable home they have provided for me, for the security, for the many opportunities they have created for me such as good education, for their faith in me and the encouragement to be independent, for their constant repeating that I can do anything I put my mind to in order to accomplish my dreams and goals. For my grandfather, who passed a few months ago, may he rest in peace. In time I realized it was not the pain for my loss I should dwell on, but that I should be grateful for the love and relationship we shared.

I am also thankful for my friends.

I am sure my life wouldn't have been the same without them. I am thankful that I can call them anytime; day or night, and they'd listen and offer me comfort, support and advice. For the laughs and memories we share, for the countless hours spent together, as well as the fights for they have only made our friendship stronger.

I am thankful for the simple things in life.

Everyday happenings, a good day at school, a good book, a song that got stuck in our head, a sunny day, my camera, a compliment that puts a smile on my face, my neighbors' fuzzy face dog, chocolate – because I couldn't possibly survive without it, the internet and the endless opportunities it offers, a good joke or a hot cup of tea made by my sister after a tiring day. I am thankful for the people and experiences in my life who have shaped me and made me become the person I am today.

I am thankful for my ups and downs, for the successes and defeats, for the contentment and disappointments and for the lessons they've taught me. Not every day will be bright and full of enjoyable but that's what makes me appreciate those moments even more. I am thankful for today and for having a bright future to look forward to, full of love, happiness, opportunities and challenges.

*By Evgenija Stojcevska; II Year
"Orce Nikolov" State High School
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What am I thankful for?

Gratitude is a virtue. One to be thankful means to be virtuous and decent. To be thankful means to be chaste and self-sacrificing, to love the life and to admire it. In the human nature is to fill strong emotions and to show them openly, to react on environment and vice versa. The most perfect feeling is happiness. When you are happy, it means that you are satisfied, but when you are satisfied you are also grateful. Happiness and gratitude always bring smile on your face, like the sun in long and wintry days. Fragile wintry sun warms my cheeks, and I think how lucky I am.

The white snowy cover hanging over the roofs and spread on the streets makes me grateful. I am thankful to the first spring flower which barely manages to put forth leaves through the dense snow. I am grateful to the flowers painted in the colors of the rainbow, playful on the lawn, in gardens and in my mother's flower-pots. I am thankful to the first juicy fruit rich with sweet nectar, to the trees with green leaves and off springs, to the joyful innocent children play. Actually, I am grateful to all big and small things: to the nature, to earth, to the breezy wind, to the working bees, to the jot of birds, to the blue sky, to the rough sea...

To be grateful means to respect everything that is around you, every humans and natural creation and to all that life is meaningless whit out it. Feeling gratitude is not a simple and subjective thing which exists for it. If you are thankful to something or to somebody, you should give something in return. For example: if you are thankful to the nature, you have to give respect and to not destroy or pollute it. Being grateful to my first teacher, for the basic knowledge she gave to me, means maintaining the education. To all my teachers I show my gratitude by studying, being honest and humble.

When I think about the happiest moments in my life, that reminds me on the faces of my best friends. Every time when I heard the words: secret, laugh, joke, help, that is connected with my contemporary, I always think how wonderful the friendship is and how grateful I am. But the most of all, I am thankful to my family, my sweat home, for the words of support, to the devotion of my closest loved one, the little fights with my younger brother. Any time when I think about the biggest and dippiest gratitude and love, I am thinking about my mother. When she looks at me, I feel overwhelmed with strong feelings and gratitude for her unselfish and unconditional love and care for my wellbeing. From time to time, I remind myself how happy and satisfied with the life we live in peace and freedom.

***By Natali Stojanovska; Grade 7
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How often is it that we calm ourselves down and for a day, an hour, or even a minute have no thoughts rushing through our heads which are constant complaints about little everyday things? As I sit here typing this, I glance at the clock. 9:17 pm. I feel like time is rushing and I'm constantly running, trying to keep up. I'll take this hour and calm myself down. I will not allow myself to complain, for I have complained before, and regretted it right after. When we complain we forget to be grateful. What am I thankful for? We constantly complain about our family and friends, when we should be glad they're there. Without these people to surround us, we would all be terribly lonely. I know there are people without families, so I'm thankful I have one to support me. Though we don't always show it, all of us are. The people around us shape our lives and influence the kind of person we become. So just like the world is trying, I'll try to become a better person and appreciate that. In today's world we face many hardships. It's hard to look past them, and look at the bright side. I've many things to be negative about in my life, as does everyone else. But being negative isn't going to get anyone anywhere. We can make the choice to either move on or hold ourselves back. I'm grateful I've met extremely optimistic people that have become my friends. Because of them I've learned that optimism can mean happiness and forgiveness. Thanksgiving is about more than being thankful. If we really look at it, it's more about pushing all the struggle and hardships away and enjoying what we're already given; the happiness which is found in our daily lives. I think concentrating on the good things keeps us moving. That doesn't mean we should ignore the bad things that happen. If we ignore the bad things then we can't change them. We just shouldn't ignore the good things either. My family and I have moved many times before. I haven't always been happy about that but there's a good side too. It's because of this that I've met people who believed that smiling at least once a day is a good thing and having a hearty laugh even better. People who knew that no matter how hard you think your life is, there's always someone else who is struggling more than you are. I moved again this year and it was hard; but I'm thankful I was able to come back without being forgotten by my old friends. That means a lot to me and makes the whole transition easier. I end this year being thankful for the experience I had, thankful that I know I always have a choice, thankful that I've been given a life to live and fulfill the way I choose to fulfill it.

***Bisera Dzundeva; Grade 8
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Thankful For Death

In 2003, when asked about his view of life after his diagnosis with inoperable lung cancer, American musician Warren Zevon responded by saying: 'Now I enjoy every sandwich.'

I only recently learnt of this instance of gallows humor. While it might sound like a funny witticism to mention at parties, in reality, it had a deeply profound effect on me. It radically changed my view of life.

I realized this year that I am going to die. I realized that death is imminent, no matter how away, no matter how distant. And I am grateful for this realization.

It struck me at first. I don't believe that anyone in the world wants to die. And the rapture one experiences when learning of their own mortality is so great, yet so underestimated. Even in today's world, especially the modern world, people often fail to realize that they are going to die. And this often overlooked fact of life is omnipresent and should be omnipotent in our lives.

But I did not experience pessimism and I do not feel fatalistic in realizing the sad truth that my life is finite. In fact, I welcome this truth as I would welcome any good news. Why is it so?

In realizing that I am going to die, I realize that I have a limited time here on Earth. And I would be better suited to use it for a worthwhile cause. I used to deny myself the simple pleasures of life. I used to escape life and isolate myself from social contact, considering it too difficult and too futile to bother myself with.

But then I experienced rapture in the form of Mr. Zevon's wisdom.

It took Warren Zevon fifty-five years and terminal lung cancer to accept the fact that he is going to die. In his final acceptance, the younger generations, so preoccupied with the here and now, often neglecting the future, had an opportunity to learn what is probably the most important truth of life, the truth that fosters a love of life like nothing else.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins said infamously: 'We are going to die, and that makes us the lucky ones, because dying is the ultimate test for life. We are lucky to be able to die, because this proves that we were once alive. This is the greatest incentive to live life with love and to the fullest.'

To conclude, I am thankful that I am going to die. I thank Mr. Zevon who opened my eyes five years after his own death.

***By Nikola Dzilvidziev, III Year
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I Am Thankful For...

The air I breathe, because without it I wouldn't be alive. The unconditional love from my family, the world I live in. I am thankful for the joy life brings me, but the sadness too, because if there isn't any sadness there will not be happiness. I am thankful for the music that I hear every day and the sun that shines so brightly upon us. Well, I can go on like this forever because I am thankful for just about everything, but aren't we all?

Anyway, it's not only the seemingly good things in life we should be thankful for, we can also be thankful for the exhaustion we sometimes feel at the end of day because it means we were working-hard the whole time or the clothes that don't fit us anymore because it means we have enough to eat and we that we have grown. I am thankful for all the work I have to do around the house because it means I have a place I can call home. I am thankful that I have to walk for up to an hour because it means that I have the ability to move. I am thankful that my parents aren't at home all the time because it means that they have jobs and I am thankful because I have something worth thanking for.

Finally, I am thankful this month that I can write this and I am thankful that I can participate in this contest as well as have fun while writing this essay. This month I am thankful for being happy and joyful, I am thankful for being loved, and I am thankful for not disappointing anyone. I am thankful for these things because they fill my life and make it so much better. And I am thankful of the attention you paid when reading this.

***By Aleksandar Dimitriev, II Year
"Orce Nikolov" State High School
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I have to tell you what am I thankful for this year.

There are so many things that happened to me, so it is a little difficult to choose which of these things are the best. I am going to start from my school.

I am thankful to my teachers that taught me to do better, especially I am grateful to my Math teacher. She is doing the best for us, and she has helped me to take better prizes in the Math competitions. And yes, the English teacher is very good, she has helped me a lot with my English. I am thankful to the piano's teacher, who was never tired and taught me how to play the piano, so I can sit and enjoy playing it.

I am delighted to the football club Barcelona. I am a very big fan of Barcelona, and lately they have done very good things.

I am thankful to my parents that brought me to live in Skopje. Until the last year I lived in Ohrid, that is really a special town, but Skopje is offering me a lot of possibilities, and better universities.

I am really grateful to my parents even for everything they have done for me. For what they offered, for better life conditions, for entertainments, activities, holidays, and for their love that fills every moment of my life, I am feeling quiet and sure when I am near them. This makes me happy, very, very happy. Sometimes I think what I will do when I have to go to study somewhere else, far away from them. But until then, there is time.

I am feeling thankful for a lot of other things that is very difficult to count here. Sometimes there are very small things that make me happy. A driver that stops his car, letting me pass the street. Somebody that is coming behind me to tell me that something fell down from my pocket. A friend that is putting me inside his umbrella.

I am grateful to Julia, the dog, that lives in front of my house, it accompanies me every day to school. I am very, very thankful to the jeans, because at last I can wear the S size, before that I was too thin. I am grateful even to the computers.

I thank God for creating Tose, Freddy Mercury and Queen, when my mom, my sister and me travel with my mom's car, we sing very loud their songs.

My grandfather has just past away, I miss him and I think that we all must enjoy love with family and friends, as long as we live.

***By Sonja Grazhdani, Grade 7
Primary School "Kole Nedelkovski"
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Thank You, Sumnal

This year I am particularly thankful for Sumnal. That is the place I started everything I have always wanted to do. Sumnal is an NGO in Topaana. Sumnal works with children and youth from three until twenty years old. They also have some special programs for old people and adults. Last summer there was a leadership camp in Krushevo where there were seventeen leaders and sixty-four participants. I was a leader. We were trained by Peace Corps Volunteers who taught us skills to be good leaders in the Roma community. The camp gave me the opportunity to use my skills as an orator and teacher and now I know I am able to handle difficult situations with teenagers in my community and beyond. The skills I learned there will always stay with me.

At Sumnal I practice my English. Thanks to Peace Corps Volunteers I am getting better from day to day. Knowing English helped me to be chosen as a representative of Roma, as a minority in Macedonia. I went to Ljubljana two weeks ago to debate against participants from all around the world. We debated on difficult issues connected to diversity. Although I had to debate against people from

Canada and the UK whose first language is English and English is my third language, I still did well.

I pay back Sumnal by volunteering every day. I come to Sumnal and I work with beginners who are just starting to learn English. I also tutor them and help them with their homework in different subjects like Maths, Biology, and English, of course. I do this because I want them to be successful and I hope that they will try to pay back to Sumnal. I see myself in them. By paying back to Sumnal we are doing good for our society- the Roma community as well as citizens in this society.

***By Osman Bajram; IV Year
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